Foundations of the Portuguese Empire, 1415–1580

by Bailey W. Diffie and George D. Winius

No other people in history made such extensive geographical explorations as the Portuguese. During the course of the fifteenth century they were the first to reveal to Europe the unknown coast of West Africa, reaching and passing the Cape of Good Hope. They made the first all-water voyage from the West to the East in 1497–99. Cabral touched on Brazil en route to India in 1500. Many of the East Indies islands had been visited by Portuguese ships before Magellan began the first voyage around the world in 1519. Christopher Columbus largely learned his trade as navigator in Portugal. By the end of the sixteenth century the Portuguese flag was flying around the world. The question arises of why the small country of Portugal led the way in exploration in the fifteenth century. This volume provides not only a narrative of the spread of the Portuguese empire but new interpretations and analyses of the history, such as a discussion of how Portuguese power differed in Africa, India, and the Far East, and an analysis of the empire's failure as a business enterprise.

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DIFFIE and WINIUS

THE PORTUGUESE EMPIRE

MINNESOTA

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by
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Europe and the World
in the Age of Expansion

VOLUME
I

CHAPTER 20

The Periphery: Indonesia

The Malay Archipelago came closest to resembling the world's treasury of spices and spicy woods. It produced, among others, nutmeg, mace, pepper, cloves, and sandalwood. If the Portuguese had possessed a hundred years of hindsight in 1500, they could have done no better than to bypass India and settle in Malaysia, as the Dutch did a century after da Gama's discovery.

The Portuguese were exceedingly interested in the area, and they demonstrated this interest as soon as Albuquerque had conquered Malacca. But their ability to exploit it was limited by the heavy commitments they had already made to the garrisons and *feitorias* in India. The result was that they had to forgo many of the potentially profitable areas — like Java — and concentrate on the commodities that paid the largest immediate dividends and on the relatively tiny areas in which they were produced. These largely consisted of the nutmeg and mace of the Banda Islands and the cloves of the Moluccas (two groups of islands rather close together) and only at the end of the century, the sandalwood of Solor and Timor, which lay en route to the other islands from Malacca.

The Portuguese crown tried to monopolize these products, as if they were from Africa or India, but it held only one real fortress, at Ternate in the Moluccas, and possessed only a part-time fleet. Moreover, its subjects smuggled spices flagrantly for their own profit. The chief officers, the captains-general of Ternate, were so far from Goa and Lisbon, and so eager to get rich in a single term of office, that they comported themselves like criminals rather than responsible administrators. João de Barros

wrote that the Moluccan Islands were the "dwelling place of all evil and have no merit save for cloves. Because God made them we have to call them good — but so far as [cloves] are the stuff for which our people came here, they are the apple of all discord and bring down more curses than ever did gold."[1]

The Archipelago before Portugal's Advent

If superimposed upon a map of North America, the islands and seas of the Malay Archipelago would stretch from San Fancisco to Bermuda and from Buffalo, New York, to Key West.[2] The area they occupy on land and sea is about four million square miles, or approximately the equivalent of the continental United States and Alaska combined. In contrast, the heartland of Portuguese Asia, the Indian coast from Diu to Cochin, was but a single strip of shoreline extending over a distance comparable to the North America coast from Portland, Oregon, to Los Angeles. It is well to keep these comparisons firmly in mind, for they suggest that the handful of Portuguese men and ships who sailed past the Strait of Malacca could not have created any but the most isolated and local centers of power, and that these would be subject only to the loosest possible control either from Goa or Lisbon.

As one might expect from reading about the political disunity the Portuguese found in India, the indigenes of the Malay Archipelago were as ethnically and religiously diverse as the Indians, and like them had no feeling of nationality and no idea that they comprised a special geographic entity of any kind. It is significant that the term "Indonesia" was not applied to the area until 1850 — and this by an English scholar. About 170 languages were spoken there — often three or more on the same islet — and in all the greater land masses, highly civilized peoples shared living space with the most backward savages. Also, all the advanced peoples had experienced diverse cultural influences imported from areas thousands of miles distant: Java, Sumatra, Bali, and the ports of Borneo and Celebes had at different times and to various degrees, become Hindu, Buddhist, and, most recently, Muslim. All the civilized areas contained to some degree a mixture of the three elements.

[1] Barros, *Da Ásia*, Dec. III, bk. 4, chap. 2.

[2] We are indebted for this comparison to Professor B. H. M. Vlekke, in his *Nusantara, a History of Indonesia*, p. 1.

Among these regions, eastern Java was the cradle for the most sophisticated cultures, and from there the arts and political influences spread outward — to nearby Bali first and then westerly toward Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. During most of the fifteenth century, for example, the dominant cultural and political power in this region was the Hindu-Buddhist kingdom of Majapahit, whose rulers had extended their sovereignty over Java and Bali, and finally all the way to the Strait of Malacca. Then Majapahit went into a rapid decline during the fifteenth century, a process simultaneous with, but probably not closely related to, a swift growth of Islam throughout Malaya and the archipelago.[3] In the vanguard of this Muslim faith were the Gujarati who traded Indian textiles for Indonesian spices, and who made converts in the course of their commercial travels on the monsoons.[4] Only much later were they followed by full-time missionaries. The nature of the conversions they effected, however, is somewhat open to question, at least so far as orthodoxy is concerned. For the canny Javanese and Sumatrese traders seem to have been less moved by a genuine love of the Prophet than by feelings that it was good business to adopt the religion of their customers and that any new source of magic would increase their inner strength and luck. Hence they did not cast out the old beliefs but merely blended the new with them. Some of the oldest Muslim gravestones found in Java are improbably adorned with a mixture of Arabic inscriptions and Shivaitic symbols.[5]

The rapid spread of Islam in the course of the fifteenth century suggests that the volume of trade among Indonesia, the Middle East, and India had grown commensurately, and that traders from Gujarat were doing business everywhere in the archipelago. This was no doubt partly because the European market was burgeoning in this period, but it was also because the Chinese traders had shifted their business from the Javanese ports to Malacca in the same era and left their old trade to the Muslims as well.[6]

[3]The original spread of Hinduism to Indonesia was no doubt via Indian merchants, but some writers believe the Hindus had come to regard oceanic travel as religiously contaminating and had left their routes in the hands of the Muslims — who in turn began to propagate their own religion in the course of their travels. About the only Hindu merchants still active in the textile-for-spice trade between India and Indonesia when the Portuguese arrived were the Klings from Coromandel.

[4]Pires, *Suma Oriental*, 1, p. 200.

[5]Vlekke, *Nusantara*, p. 86.

[6]See Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade*, pp. 26, 82; also Pires, *Suma Oriental*, 1, p. 179.

Before Vasco da Gama reached India in 1499, the Portuguese could hardly have discovered where cloves, nutmeg, and mace came from, because all these luxury commodities among the spices were funneled through Indian markets after transport from Indonesia. But once the Portuguese had arrived on the Indian scene, they surely learned the facts very quickly and decided that if the nutmeg, mace, and cloves on sale there fetched such an enormously higher price per hundredweight than pepper did, then it would be profitable to trace them directly to their places of origin. Albuquerque lost so little time in seeking the Moluccas after his conquest of Malacca that it is logical to assume the Portuguese had pieced together a fairly complete picture of Southeast Asia and its trading patterns even before he left Goa. Undoubtedly Muslim pilots and traders were the best source of information, among them those who had either guided Diogo Lopes de Sequeira to Malacca or talked to him after he had arrived there two years before.

It was in November 1511, only three months after Malacca had fallen, that Albuquerque dispatched an expedition of three ships to seek the Moluccas under his captain, António de Abreu, and with another officer, Francisco Serrão, as commander of one of the vessels. Significantly it not only bore Javanese pilots to show the way, but was preceded by a native merchant ship and a rich Malaccan Muslim, Nehoda Ismael, to make sure the Portuguese would be well received.[7] Abreu reached Amboina and the Banda Islands safely, filled his holds with cloves, nutmeg, and mace, and returned to Malacca. Serrão and eight of his men, however, became shipwrecked on the reefs of an island, probably Giliang, whose only inhabitants were sea turtles. Fortunately, the Portuguese wreckage was spied by a band of Malaysian pirates, who specialized in exploiting just such distress. Serrão and his sailors saw them coming and merely lay low, waiting for the cutthroats to come ashore. Then they sprang up behind them and commandeered their vessel to the Moluccas.[8]

The Portuguese captain and his men were stranded there for three years, and, having little else to occupy them, they began supporting the sultan of Ternate, the Kechil Boleif, against his local enemy, the sultan of Tidore. By 1514, when a new Portuguese expedition arrived, Serrão and a few of his companions had so ingratiated themselves with the sultan and had become so adapted to their new life-style that they chose to remain

[7] Barros, *Da Ásia*, Dec. III, bk. 5, chap. 6.
[8] See Humberto Leitão, *Os portugueses em Solor e Timor de 1515 a 1702*, pp. 39–41.

after their countrymen's ships had returned to Malacca. They were not likely to have craved the companionship of their countrymen, however; there were subsequent, albeit small Portuguese expeditions from Malacca to the Banda Islands and the Moluccas in 1516, 1517, 1518, and 1519.[9]

Spain versus Portugal: the Moluccas Question

Although Serrão stayed on after the Portuguese ships had sailed away, he sent dispatches and letters by them to his superiors and closest friends. One of his missives almost certainly went to an intimate of his, a youngish captain (aged about thirty) named Fernão de Magalhães, better known by the Hispanicized Magellanes or Magellan. By the time this communication reached him, Magellan had served seven or eight years in minor posts in the Orient and had been a participant in many of the noteworthy events there, including the capture of Malacca. More recently he had served King Manuel at Azemmour in North Africa.

It is not known how or when Magellan actually received his great inspiration that the Spice Islands, or Moluccas, were accessible from South America, nor is it known whether he spelled it out to Manuel or anybody connected with the Portuguese court or councils. But it is known that he was in disfavor, at least temporarily, because while in charge of dividing up the spoils from a victorious clash near Azemmour he had been accused by dissidents of keeping the lion's share for himself. Magellan had bitterly denied this.

Had he mentioned his idea to any of his Portuguese superiors, it is extremely likely that he would have incurred further disfavor — since the sole consequence would have been to call Spain's attention to something which could cause trouble for Portugal. For it will be recalled that the Tordesillas Treaty of 1494 drew an Atlantic line of demarcation at about 46° west latitude, but did not make explicit that the knife that slices through one side of an orange from stem to navel will emerge to halve it precisely on the opposite side, 180° away, or, in this instance, at 134° east latitude. This extension, however, was implicit, and Portugal had nothing to gain by putting the idea in Spanish heads that the eastern part of the Indonesian Archipelago and with it the Moluccas, might be within the Spanish hemisphere. Geographers and statesmen of the era were acutely

[9] Leitão, *Portugueses em Solor e Timor*, pp. 53–54.

conscious that there yet existed no precise method of determining longitude. Moreover, the vague and inaccurate maps based on Ptolemy placed the Golden Chersonese, or Malay Peninsula, too far to the east. The Portuguese always suspected darkly that the Spanish would seize on any pretext to claim the Moluccas for themselves — which in fact they did.[10]

Whatever the origins of Magellan's difficulty, he would have been compelled to take his idea to the Spanish because they alone stood to gain from it. In many ways, Magellan is the spiritual successor to Columbus. For not only was he similarly obliged by circumstances to take service with Spain, but his idea and its successful execution actually accomplished what Columbus had failed to — that is, finding Asia by sailing to the west. The only difference is that Portugal might have profited if it had sponsored Columbus, but it stood only to lose had it underwritten Magellan.

The magnificent voyage of Magellan, undertaken for Charles V, belongs to a history of Spain and Spanish expansion. Perhaps the only thing to be said about it from a Portuguese viewpoint is that the Portuguese cartographer Rui Faleiro lent his salesmanship and learning to the task of convincing the Spaniards that they should underwrite the journey; Magellan led it and his brother-in-law Duarte Barbosa, author of the first European description of the ports and lands of maritime Asia, went along. In addition, a Portuguese writer, the Visconte de Lagôa, has reckoned that some 40 of the approximately 240 crew members were Portuguese.[11] The outcome, however, was totally Spanish: both Charles of Spain's discovery and claim to the Philippines (named for his son) and his counterclaims to the Moluccas were based upon Magellan's achievement.

Enough has already been said about the interaction between the emperor and João III (in chapter 17) to suggest that, ultimately, the "Moluccas Question" was decided not so much on the basis of the practical limits of each monarchy's power as it was on the willingness of João III to accommodate himself to the emperor's bullying. All that remains to be described is the short-lived Luso-Spanish rivalry in the Indonesian Archipelago and the actual terms of the settlement between the two Iberian monarchies.

[10] See Almeida's orders of 6 April 1507(?) as reprinted in *Cartas de Albuquerque*, III, pp. 268–276; also reproduced in Artur Basilio de Sá, *Documentação para a história das missões do padroado português do Oriente: Insulíndia*, 1, pp. 3–15.

[11] Visconde de Lagôa, *Fernão de Magalhães (A sua vida e a sua viagem)*, I, 265–315.

Portuguese countermeasures began almost immediately after Magellan's departure from Spain, for King Manuel's informants in Seville sent word to Lisbon as soon as the fleet had hoisted anchor. Quickly, orders were sent via India that a Portuguese squadron should be dispatched to build a fortress in the Moluccas and prevent the renegade from proclaiming the area a Spanish possession. As events actually occurred, the Portuguese arrived and departed six months ahead of the Spanish who were long delayed in the Philippines and Borneo. But in June 1522 a Portuguese commander, António de Brito, had been sent out to fortify Ternate, and he heard there that Magellan's two surviving ships were still lurking in the vicinity, at Tidore. He succeeded in capturing one of them, the *Trinidad,* at Tidore before it could elude him.[12] The other ship, the *Victoria,* had already departed. It arrived in Spain that September, laden with enough cloves to allow Charles V a huge profit, enough to pay for the whole expedition several times over.

João III, when he heard late in September 1522 that the *Victoria* had evaded all of the traps his father had set for it and had arrived safely in Spain, sent a vehement protest to the emperor that Spaniards had poached deliberately on territory that had been discovered and occupied by Portugal. The emperor, always measured in his handling of others, did not hurl an angry counterprotest at João, which might have provoked an explosion. Instead, he proposed to join João in appointing a Luso-Spanish study commission that would arbitrate the matter and send two ships to the Malay Archipelago to fix the line in its proper position. He further proposed that the papacy should send a third vessel to arbitrate and, if the commission members could not agree, then the Holy See should impose its own conclusions.[13] The proposal sounded reasonable enough on the surface.

The snare, however, was that by suggesting that the matter be submitted to joint study and arbitration, Charles was in effect asking João to recognize that Spain had a serious claim. The pope at that time (December 1522) was Adrian VI, Charles's old tutor — which could hardly hurt the Spanish cause. And the very fact that half the commission, the

[12] His account survives and is reprinted in José Ramos Coelho (ed.), *Alguns documentos do Archivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, acerca das navegações e conquistas portuguêzas,* pp. 464–476.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 462.

Spanish side, were to be Charles's appointees, meant that they would certainly find in his favor and keep the combined body from making any decision until it gave the Spanish at least something of what they wanted.

João III eventually accepted the proposal — no doubt his double-marriage plans with the Hapsburgs, even then being arranged, had a good deal to do with his willingness — and the commission met on April 11, 1524, between Elvas and Badajoz in the middle of the bridge that crossed the Caia, the tiny stream dividing the two countries. Its deliberations fill exactly 100 solid pages of a modern folio-size volume of printed documents.[14] This is no wonder at all, since there were almost enough delegates, advisors, geographical experts, and hangers-on to comprise a small army; they included, among others, Sebastiano del Cano, the captain who brought the *Victoria* home, Sebastian Cabot, Fernando Colón, or Columbus, and Diogo Lopes de Sequeira.

The illustrious names of some of the commissioners, however, did not assure the production of illustrious arguments: before its inconclusive adjournment on May 31, the commission labored mightily without having decided what Atlantic base line should be selected as the proper prime from which to calculate the Pacific meridian in question — or even the length of a degree of longitude. Naturally the Spanish followed Ptolemy as closely as possible, for a smaller earth and consequently width of a degree meant a better chance of keeping the Moluccas in their hemisphere. The Portuguese, of course, held out for a larger earth and a longer degree.[15] To this kind of argument there was really no solution save with tools more sophisticated than those the age possessed. Ultimately, the Portuguese, who commanded much greater experience in navigation than the Spanish, were proved much more nearly right in their calculations. But the only practical benefit from the deliberations accrued to the Spanish: they gained a podium from which to publicize their ideas and bring pressure on Lisbon.

Nothing came of the emperor's suggestions that representatives of both parties should repair to the actual site of the disagreement or that the pope should send a delegation. Probably nothing would have been settled had an on-site inspection materialized, for neither celestial sightings nor

[14] *Cartas de Albuquerque*, IV, pp. 73–173.

[15] For an account of the negotiations, see Armando Cortesão's chapter "O descobrimento da Australia e a 'questão das Moluccas,'" pp. 129–150.

dead reckoning are useful in determining questions of longitude. The midstream meetings doubtlessly served Charles's purpose just as well. He had now created a bargaining position for himself, and he could not help but win something if he kept up the pressure, for example by sending out subsequent expeditions in Magellan's track as he did the following year, 1525.

Ultimately, as already recounted in chapter 17, he offered the Portuguese a six-year "lease" on his Moluccan pretensions for an exorbitant sum, and then, when they did not rise to the bait, he sold all his claims to them outright for the 350,000 gold-dobra price already discussed. Spain and Portugal signed a treaty to this effect at Zaragoza on April 22, 1529. Portugal now possessed unchallenged access to the Moluccas. The only portion of the treaty recognizing that Portugal might have been right in the matter all along was a proviso stating that if the Molucca Islands were proved clearly to lie within the Portuguese hemisphere, the emperor must return the payment, since his claims would have been shown to be invalid. Otherwise, the Portuguese held "all right, action, domain, propriety and possession, or semi-possession and all right to navigate, contract and trade in any manner desired [in the Moluccas.]" There then followed a formula designed to set the longitudinal meridian dividing Spanish and Portuguese hemispheres far enough to the east so that the Moluccas would lie within Lisbon's domain whether by Portuguese or Spanish computations.[16]

Thus ended, officially at least, the aftermath of Magellan's circumnavigation and the unfinished business of the Tordesillas Treaty. Unofficially, the Spanish continued to take liberties with the arrangement, both because they felt they had been deceived by the Portuguese and because, having discovered the Philippines, they felt they should keep the de facto right to occupy them.[17] Their real stumbling block was that no one had managed to sail back across the Pacific from Indonesia or the Philippines, and that most Spaniards had been captured by the Portuguese before returning home via the Cape of Good Hope. Until the monkish navigator Andrés de Urdaneta beat his way back across the Pacific in 1565, there could have been no serious Spanish ideas of Pacific settlement.

[16] *Alguns documentos*, pp. 500–502.

[17] A good deal of the sentiment on both sides seems to have ignored the question of where the meridians actually divided the world and merely emphasized the primacy of discovery. For example, see the testimony of Diogo Lopes de Sequeira in *GTT*, III, p. 20.

The Pattern of Exploitation

The initial passage of António de Abreu from Malacca to Amboina, as already described, had been led by a Malaccan merchant ship and aided by Malay pilots. They followed a course used by virtually all native shipping that plied between Malacca and spice islands to the east. In fact, this course was made so inevitable by the direction of the monsoons in the area and the shapes and locations of the islands, great and tiny alike, that any alternate routes were almost impossible — or at least not worth the roundaboutness and difficulty.

A glance at the simplest map of Southeast Asia will show that western Sumatra overlaps the Malay Peninsula so far to the northwest that any Moluccan-bound sailing vessel setting out from Malacca in August must necessarily travel southeast either through the Karimata Strait or more likely through a more southerly passage between Borneo and Sumatra and into the Java Sea. It would have been foolish to go any other way. For example, not only is the western shore of Sumatra a lea shore and dangerous for navigation, but it would require a 1200-mile detour from Malacca to pass around the north end of Sumatra and sail back on the west side to the same lititude, let alone the fact that half of this detour would have to be against the wind! Similarly, there was hardly much more reason for anyone's wishing to make the long detour around the north of Borneo, though it was done occasionally, and as early as 1526. Not only would the northerly extension of this large island necessitate an extreme detour similar to the detour around Sumatra, but the pattern of the winds would render such a passage very difficult. These blow down the South China Sea out of the northeast, then bend almost like a fishhook, and flow into the Java Sea from the west. Since the same pattern prevails in the Makassar Strait, there is no possible reason to detour around the north end of Celebes either.

In March or April, the return passage from the Moluccas to Malacca on the southeast monsoons is only possible if one takes the same passage in reverse, for it might then be easy enough to reach the northern extremes of Borneo or Celebes. But it would prove extremely laborious to sail back to Malacca without waiting for another season's reversal of winds, although on very long trading voyages, this was sometimes done. Even the preferred direct route was littered with dangers similar to those of the Red Sea; all the early authorities from Francisco Rodrigues and João de

Lisboa to the Frenchman François Pyrard de Laval speak of the navigational perils to be encountered in the Java Sea, where hundreds of isles and reefs blocked the way and made sailing at night impossible. Even by day, Pyrard says, one went nowhere, except with plumb line in hand.[18] Much of the time, vessels plying between Malacca and the Moluccas called at other points on the way — in Java, for example, and in the Banda Islands. In those instances, passages took more than a single seasonal cycle of the monsoon winds, and vessels were often twenty or more months at sea completing their round trips.

What these conditions, wind patterns, and hazards signified for Portuguese navigation between Malacca and the Moluccas is that for all practical purposes it was restricted to a single track prescribed by nature — and it only stands to reason that the sole Portuguese settlements of any consequence outside the Moluccas — in Amboina, in the Bandas, and much later in Solor and Timor — lay near the well-traveled route.

The sequence of Portuguese settlement and administration in Indonesia is revealing. For the first sixty years or so, there were only four *feitorias* and one fort in the whole archipelago: the fort, São João on Ternate, which together with its settlement resembled a European colonial town in architecture and plan, and three very much smaller unfortified or only lightly stockaded communities, one in Amboina and two in the Bandas on Lontar and Neira. All originated in the 1520s: for example, the fort in Ternate dated from the presence there first of Serrão and after 1521 of António de Brito, a newly appointed captain-general of the Moluccas; and the *feitoria* in Amboina had resulted from the solicitation in 1522 of the native population who sought Portuguese protection from nearby enemies.[19] From these bases in the years that followed, trade expanded among the islands while Portuguese administration did not.

There are several plausible explanations for this. One is that the states to the east of Sumatra, though nominally Muslim were mostly producers, not middlemen, and were less concerned with trade competition than with getting a good price.[20] Hence the Portuguese freely bought nutmeg

[18] François Pyrard de Laval, *The Voyage of François Pyrard de Laval*, 2, chap. 12.

[19] This is not to count a fort constructed in 1521 at Pacem, as the Portuguese called Pasummah, in Sumatra. It was forced to surrender to Atjeh the following year.

[20] Gujarat, for instance, was bound to be a competitor of the Portuguese because Portugal strove to displace its trade with an alternative system. This was also true of Atjeh and Johore, but it was not so with the states that merely grew or made something to trade or sell.

and mace in the Banda Islands (and even settled there), sandalwood in Timor, cloth in Java, and many other commodities like sulphur in Solor — without ever having to level their guns. Under those trading conditions, there could have been little motive for the Portuguese to employ their Malabar and Deccan strong-arm tactics, especially when they were so far from their own power bases. But whatever the cause and effect, the Portuguese behaved more like ordinary merchants in much of Indonesia than they did anywhere except in Bengal and the China Seas.

A second likely reason why the Portuguese did not enter more ambitiously into the establishment of *feitorias* and fortresses in Indonesia is that Malacca, upon which they would have had to depend for the supplies of manpower and munitions to undertake such enterprises, no doubt had little of these to spare because of its continual and debilitating fights with its neighbors, Atjeh across the strait in Sumatra and Johore, the state near Singapore which had been founded by the heirs of Sultan Mohamed of Malacca. In fact, this rivalry during the sixteenth century sometimes makes it difficult to tell whether the Portuguese were dominating the strait or the strait was bottling up the Portuguese. As Professor Meilink-Roelofsz points out, the basis of this hostility was competition for the same markets and involved quite the opposite of what has been spoken about in connection with the producers of spices and other commodities.[21] Johore and Atjeh both sought to displace Malacca as the warehouse and interchange point between East and South Asia. They frequently besieged it, the Portuguese retaliated with raids and expeditions against their capitals, and the two native principalities scrapped with one another. The strait never remained at peace for more than a few years.

In 1513, for instance, Atjeh's fleet challenged the Portuguese and was destroyed in battle; in 1517 Johore unsuccessfully besieged Malacca; and in 1525 did so again, whereupon captain-general Pero Mascarenhas of Malacca paid Johore a return visit. Then there were subsequent sieges of Malacca in 1550, 1567, and 1571, when Atjeh consorted with Bijapur to besiege the city and was beaten off. Thereafter, the area quieted down, but only until 1586. Matters would have been worse still for Portugal had not Johore and Atjeh been mutually at odds. The whole situation bore constant watching by the Portuguese, and they could hardly have used Malacca all this while as an effective arsenal for the supply of additional forts in Indonesia.

[21] Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade*, pp. 139–146.

In fact when the Portuguese finally did find some new outposts there — and this was not until after 1561 in the Solor group and after the 1580s in Timor — it was not the military who led the way, but the missionaries, whose presence and need for protection gradually involved officialdom and led to the appointments of captains and other officers and to the erection of strongholds.[22] That Portuguese economic patterns in Indonesia did not any longer hinge upon fortress building or actual possession is suggested by the fact that before a captain was appointed whose charge extended over Timor — in 1593 — the Portuguese had been trading there for white and yellow sandalwood for about fifty years; and it was not for another seventy years that they actually made up their minds to erect a permanent settlement and dominate the region.

In contrast to the Dutch seventeenth-century empire in Asia which made Java the very heart of its operations, the Portuguese had very little to do with this important island. Probably this was partly because they did not need its pepper and partly because they lacked the naval power to challenge its native principalities on the seas. For the most part they skirted all but the eastern end, where they used Hindu Panarukan as a way station between Malacca and the Moluccas. They also bought much of Malacca's rice supply from one Javanese region or another in the sixteenth century; they bought some pepper intermittently from Bantam; and toward the end of the era, they traded for some Javanese cloth to use in barter for sandalwood and spices elsewhere in the archipelago. Otherwise, aside from a few skirmishes at sea the Portuguese had with Japara in the second half of the sixteenth century, next to nothing is even known about their official relations with Java. It appears that, so far as Portugal was concerned, it merely lay along the route to the Spice Islands, where the important trading activity was concentrated on obtaining the cloves, mace, and nutmeg which were uniquely available there. For the Portuguese, these were the cargoes that brought the highest prices per hundredweight in Europe and that repaid best the limited amount of capital and manpower that could be devoted to Indonesia.

Of these prime luxury spices, most of the nutmeg and mace (products of the same plant) was obtained from the two Portuguese *feitorias* in the Bandas, and cloves came from all five of the Moluccan Islands, but principally from Ternate and Tidore. Amboina, located between the Moluccas

[22] Leitão, *Os portugueses em Solor e Timor*, pp. 75–205.

and Bandas, raised cloves and nutmeg and mace, apparently not indigenously but in response to a growing demand from foreign traders. In nearly all instances, the exchange commodity was cotton cloth from India.

From the early years of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese intent in the Spice Islands was to operate a tight crown monopoly where the *feitor* alone handled all transactions at fixed prices (see chapter 18). This was eventually liberalized to include some private trading after the royal ships had been served — among other reasons, probably to provide an incentive for *casados* to move in from Malacca and India and help forestall further Spanish attempts at occupation via the New World.[23] Under this modification of 1535, private traders were required to register their purchases with the *feitor*, who would thereupon claim a third part for the crown at a fixed price, always lower than that of the free market. Finally, the spices had to be transported to Malacca in royal ships, for which the *feitor* charged an additional three-tenths of the private cargo. In 1537, however, the crown tried to revert to the older strict monopoly system save for some exceptions made in favor of Ternate's crown officials and a small amount of personal trading by crew members of official ships. This, of course, was an impossible move, and it was only in effect while the rigidly honest captain-general António Galvão remained in office. Thereafter, the rules were unenforceable: Gonçalo Pereira, the only other captain who seriously attempted to do his duty, was murdered by his subordinates. Even the captains-general and high officers of Malacca undertook illicit voyages, mostly to the Banda Islands, where they kept out of sight of Ternate while they bought nutmeg, mace, and some cloves (which had been smuggled over from the Moluccas).[24] And, finally, even the original native trade in spices continued to thrive: the islands were so numerous and the passages so myriad that it was all but impossible to keep it down.

The crown's actual role in the trade after 1523 consisted of two large ships per year which plied between Goa and Cochin and the Spice Islands. One was a cloves ship which went to Ternate, the other a nutmeg and mace ship which put in at Lontar and Neira in the Bandas. The concessions for both were granted to *fidalgos* in return for services or favors, or to influential merchants. In both instances, the appointees acted as their own *feitores* and were usually allowed to borrow a ship from

[23] Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *L 'Economie de l'empire portugais*, pp. 794–795.
[24] Magalhães Godinho, *L'economie de l'empire portugais*, p. 806.

the *Carreira*, and often even to outfit it on royal credit.[25] After all the expenses were paid — including government tonnage charges, the cost of provisioning the fortress at Ternate, and the royal share of the spices (about one-third) — the appointees were still assured of a profit of about 15,000 cruzados, while the government cleared about 20,000.[26] Those arrangements saved the crown a good deal of expense in outfitting the vessels, no doubt; but they also paid the grantee a fortune for his services. Probably, it was the best that could be expected, since, had the government done the outfitting and sailing, graft on the part of its officials would have taken the same amount or more.

The most conspicuous breakdown of royal authority in Indonesia appears not to have been so much economic as political. The Portuguese captains-general of the Moluccas were not eager to travel so far and to such a fabled region merely out of devotion to royal service, or to satisfy a romantic curiosity about tropical sunsets. They came to get rich, and their appointments lasted but three years. Typically, they arrived hungrily on the scene with all their relatives and hangers-on, and they worked frantically — but not for the king. Their activities give Luso-Moluccan relations a flavor all their own.

Portuguese Rule in the Spice Islands

Just as it seemed that only saints went to Ethiopia, it would appear that mostly sinners went to Amboina, Ternate, or the Banda group, the only spice-producing islands on which the Portuguese settled to any extent during most of the sixteenth century. Contemporaries who could assess the situation better than anyone today ascribed the prevailing wickedness on Ternate to "captains, who, being so far from authority's reach, pursue their own whims rather than your [Majesty's] service, because we have the kind here who do not follow their orders either in whole or in part, nor allow the other officials to follow theirs — not even their magistrates [to enforce] the ordinances."[27]

In addition to this penchant for wickedness on the part of the Portuguese, the comparatively primitive native inhabitants were not exactly

[25] See Sá, *Insulíndia*, IV, pp. 41–42 and 52–53. Also, Panduronga Pissurlencar, *Regimentos das fortalezas da India*, pp. 468–474.

[26] Magalhães Godinho, *L'economie de l'empire portugais*, p. 811.

[27] In a letter to João III from Ternate. See Sá, *Insulíndia*, I, 475.

innocent themselves. For one thing, they had a long history of headhunting which had only recently disappeared. For another, the Blessed Francis Xavier, who struggled hard and persistently but did not succeed in reforming either the captains or the indigenes during his sojourn there in 1545–46, observed of the Moluccans that "they are a people who poison those whom they don't like, and in this manner they kill one another aplenty."[28] He also complained that although the sultan of Ternate spoke Portuguese very well and felt himself honored to be a vassal of João III's, he didn't become Christian, not because he was especially devoted to the Muslim religion, but because "of not wanting to give up his carnal vices." The Amboinese he described as "very barbaric and full of treasons."[29]

None of these statements appear to have been far from wrong, because the sixteenth-century Asian chronicles and documents of the Portuguese occupation of Ternate and Amboina tell of little else than a steady succession of internecine rivalries, double crosses, murders, and even mass acts of criminal violence. In comparison, the story of Portuguese India, or even of nearby Timor and Solor in later times, seems almost tame. To begin with, about 1521 Francisco Serrão, the shipwrecked (1511) friend of Magellan who had become the bulwark of the Ternatean throne, was reported to have been poisoned along with his friend the sultan by the sultan of Tidore.[30]

The following year, António de Brito, the first *fidalgo* who formally took charge as captain-general of the Moluccas (previously mentioned as having seized the Spanish vessel *Trinidad* near Tidore), discovered how difficult it was to carry out his duties in the Moluccas. Not only was the fortress he was to build on Ternate delayed when scores of his men sickened and died, but his attempts to get rid of Tidore's ruler were all sabotaged by a powerful wife of the deceased sultan of Ternate who acted as regent for the boy king, the Kechil Daroez, and who happened to be the daughter of the sultan he sought to depose.[31] Then a few years later when his successor Garcia Henriques finally succeeded in making peace with Tidore, the Kechil Daroez became so enraged at not having been consulted that he himself ostentatiously made peace with his bitter rival. Henriques became so worried that the real aim of both rulers was to expel

[28] In a letter to his order in Rome, *Ibid.*, pp. 536–537.
[29] In an addition to a letter sent to his confreres in Europe, *Ibid.*, p. 498.
[30] In a letter by King Aby Hyat to João, in Sá, *Insulíndia*, I, 123.
[31] Barros, *Da Ásia*, Dec. III, bk. 5, chap. 7.

the Europeans that in 1526 he reversed himself by surprising Tidore and burning it.

As if the Portuguese were not frustrated enough by the Moluccans, within weeks after this fiasco, Martín Yanez, the surviving leader of the Spanish expedition sent in the wake of Magellan by Charles V, sailed into Tidore with some 300 men and was warmly welcomed when he let it be known that the Spaniards opposed Portugal. The Tidoreans swiftly helped him construct a fort, and when Henriques and the Portuguese attacked it, they were twice repulsed with losses.

As Henriques pondered what move to make next, the whole situation became further — and almost hopelessly — complicated by the arrival of his successor, Jorge de Menezes, who had been appointed by Lopo Vaz de Sampaio. It will be recalled from chapter 17 that the governorship of India underwent a disputed succession at this time between Pero Mascarenhas and Sampaio, when Mascarenhas, who had been appointed by the king, was unable to sail from Malacca to Goa in time. Captains in Asia were notoriously unwilling to give up their appointments under any circumstances, and this time a nasty struggle broke out between the two men which gave the Spaniards on Tidore a respite until 1528, or the year when Menezes finally sent Henriques to Malacca in chains. After one more repulse by the Spaniards, Menezes finally forced their surrender, whence some of them eventually returned to Spain via Goa.

Menezes, so far from any surveillance by his superiors, turned out to be a devil in the flesh. He poisoned the sultan of Ternate and beheaded the regent before he was arrested. His successor as captain of the Moluccas was one Gonçalo Pereira, who was murdered when, with honest intentions, he tried to investigate the smuggling of cloves, in which practically all his subordinates were implicated. His successors were no better than Jorge de Menezes, and after the next one, Tristão de Ataíde, arrived, he falsely imprisoned the Kechil Aeiro, on charges of killing Pereira, sent him in chains to Goa, raised a bastard to the throne,[32] and, in reward for his efforts, saw a league of the surrounding island peoples raised against

[32]The bastard, Kechil Pucaraga, became a convert to Christianity and reigned as King Manuel. At his early death, he donated his kingdom to João III and for good measure threw in Amboina for his spiritual mentor, the captain-general of the Moluccas, Jordão de Freitas. The arrangements were annuled, however, when João de Castro exonerated Kechil Aeiro as the rightful ruler of Ternate and returned him to the Moluccas with Bernardim de Sousa. Freitas was arrested. See Sá, *Insulindia*, I, 550, and IV, 31–40; also *Gavetas*, IX (1971), pp. 305–306. Tristão de Ataíde's letter to João III also contains information about the Spanish incursion under Martin Yanez. See pp. 307–312.

Portugal. It was not until 1536 that a captain arrived who was both honest and successful. He was António Galvão, the son of the deceased ambassadorial appointee to Abyssinia. He was both a gentleman and a scholar (years later in Lisbon he wrote the celebrated *Tratado dos descobrimentos*), and he was able not only to break up the league against the Portuguese but to win the respect of the Moluccans by treating them justly and even founding a seminary for them. After the expiration of his term in 1538, however, Ternate never again received a worthy captain, and all the dismal patterns established before António Galvão's advent were repeated with few variations until in 1576 the Portuguese were expelled from Ternate.

In 1542, four years after Galvão's departure, incidentally, some 300 more Spaniards sailed into the Moluccas from the New World, this time under Captain Ruy Lopes de Villalobos. Immediately, they headed for Tidore and fortified themselves. For almost three years they resisted all attempts to capture them made by two Portuguese officers, one of whom, Jordão de Freitas, was even obliged to sign an agreement with Villalobos in 1545 permitting him temporary occupation of his island stronghold. But by the end of that year, sickness and privation finally caught up with the Spaniards and they surrendered to the next captain-general, Bernardim de Sousa, on the option either of taking service with Portugal or of being transported — eventually — back to Europe.[33] For modern readers, the real significance of the incursion is that it provides another link between Magellan's original expedition, its visit to the Moluccas, and the actual Spanish settlement in the Philippines in 1571. It shows that in spite of King João's huge payment in 1529, the Spanish were unconvinced that they had forgone all claims in the Pacific and that they intended to pursue them.

This third Spanish incursion may have created some problems for the Portuguese, but these were minor beside the corrupt and irresponsible leadership that continued to plague them in the Moluccas.

The great Portuguese Asian governor João de Castro had exonerated and sent home (with the outcoming captain, Bernardim de Sousa) Sultan

[33] Couto, *Da Asia*, Dec. V, bk. 8, chap. 10; bk. 9, chap. 6; and bk. 10, chap. 5, is the major source for these details, but see also the *História das Ilhas de Maluco escripta no anno de 1561*, as reprinted in Sá, *Insulindia*, III, 193–218. There is also another work on the subject which may have been written by António Galvão himself. It is edited by Hubert M. Jacobs, S. J. as: *A Treatise on the Moluccas (c. 1544); Probably the Preliminary Version of António Galvão's lost História das Moluccas*. See especially pp. 317–326.

Kechil Aeiro, whom Captain Tristão de Ataíde had falsely accused of murder and shipped to India, and for a few years afterward there were at least no sensational injustices in Ternate. But in 1565, the new captain, a repulsive character named Duarte de Deça (or Eça), not only had imprisoned the sultan and his family unjustly, but tried to poison them as well. Finally, his own men became so fed up with his tactics that, in face of a new native uprising, they arrested him.[34]

Duarte de Deça, however, was only an amateur and a bungler as an evildoer. Unfortunately for the Portuguese and the Ternateans, a really vicious commander came on the scene in 1567 in the person of Diogo Lopes de Mesquita, a *fidalgo* of the king's household and a scoundrel whom Couto alone has exposed.[35] This man contrived to increase the Ternatean sultan's personal tribute in cloves until it amounted virtually to the whole supply, except for that share required by the royal Portuguese monopoly; then he mulcted it all for himself. When the Kechil Aeiro, an amiable man completely loyal to the Portuguese, became angry in 1568, Mesquita apologized elaborately and was forgiven. Then, when the Kechil's guard was down, he had him stabbed to death. Not even the smallest cruelty escaped this captain-general. The sultan's family desired to give the body a decent burial; Mesquita had it cut in pieces and thrown into the sea.[36]

Nobody could blame the new sultan, the Kechil Babullah, for swearing to exact vengeance on the murderers of his father. He called upon his people and his allies to wage a war and throw the Portuguese out of the Moluccas. He could hardly have picked a better time — or a worse one for the Portuguese — for in 1570 and thereafter, the allied assault on Goa, Chaul, and Malacca (see chapter 17) not only kept the viceroy from sending adequate relief but left Portuguese India considerably weakened. Other events worked against them, too.

At the same time that the Portuguese were wearing out their welcome on Ternate, a different upheaval against the Portuguese took place on Amboina and created a serious diversion from the affairs of Ternate, although in this instance, the provocation offered the natives by the Por-

[34] Couto, *Da Ásia*, Dec. VII, bk. 4, chap. 7 and bk. 5, chap. 2. When he was returned to Portugal from Goa, however, he went unpunished.

[35] The chronicler António Bocarro, in his manuscript *História geral de Maluco*, mentions that Mesquita ordered the king's death, but says he doesn't know why he did it. See Sá, *Insulíndia*, IV, 210.

[36] Couto, *Da Ásia*, Dec. VIII, chap. 26.

tuguese does not appear to have been of the same magnitude. In fact, one readily recalls Xavier's observation made twenty-one years before that the Amboinese were "barbaric and full of treasons." During a banquet given in appreciation for a successful joint victory, the supposedly Christian (a result of Xavier's own preaching) Amboinese took umbrage at a drunken Portuguese who tried to seduce the beautiful young daughter of Chieftain Jemelio or Genullio. When Jemelio came on the scene to protest, the drunk struck him. That was all the Amboinese needed. They expelled the Portuguese, who protested that the rudeness was only of one man, not of the whole group. The Amboinese, however, were barely getting underway. Seething, they attacked a nearby Christian people still friendly to the Portuguese, and merely because they remained steadfast, they not only tortured and put them to death, but were even said to have reverted to cannibalism.[37]

All this was too much for the Portuguese to handle at once. The arrival at Amboina of the experienced naval commander Gonçalo Pereira Marramaque with reinforcements soon quelled the trouble and restored the Portuguese garrison. But by the time Marramaque had returned order to Amboina, he no longer had the strength to squelch Babullah's army fighting the Portuguese on Ternate. Seven years later, in 1575, the army had closed in on the Portuguese fortress itself and laid it under siege. Marramaque was expected again; but this time news arrived instead that all his ships had gone down in a storm.

Sultan Babullah then pressed home his attack, a native ally on whose help the Portuguese had counted deserted them, and the Jesuits urged surrender; Ternate capitulated in 1576.[38] Although the sultan of Tidore, always jealous of Ternate and fearful of its power, invited them to fortify Tidore in 1578, the Portuguese were never as well situated as on Ternate. When the Dutch arrived at the turn of the century, the natives of the Moluccas and of Amboina all willingly lent a hand to expel them.

[37] See Couto, *Da Ásia*, Dec. VIII, chap. 25; also compare Sá, *Insulíndia*, IV, 197–202.

[38] For the fall of S. João de Ternate, see Fr. Francisco de Sousa, S. J., *Oriente conquistado a Jesu Christo*, II, 327–330.